

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

Steve Bullock
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney
LT. GOVERNOR

May 28, 2019

Secretary Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Alexander Acosta
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Perdue and Secretary Acosta:

I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment over the announcement that you will be closing the Job Corps Center in Anaconda, Montana as part of a nationwide reorganization. Due to the adverse impact this decision will have on the Anaconda community and the entire state of Montana, I urge you to re-consider this decision.

Montana, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a workforce shortage. We have joined your administration in looking for solutions to this scarcity of workers. The Job Corps Centers have provided a vital pathway to bring skilled individuals into the workforce. The center in Anaconda graduates an average of 170 young adults per year, trained by competent instructors in high-demand areas. This is an important training center for local employers in manufacturing, heavy equipment operation, diesel mechanics, welding, and other trades, representing a critical part of our training system in this state. Analysis of our state's education and training system has identified many of these occupations as ones in need of more workers. Closing this center will be damaging to our state's worker training system, harming our manufacturing industry.

As you know, Montana and many other western states suffer from extensive annual wildfires. Over the last two years alone, over 1.4 million acres of our state has burned in forest fires, with costs of over \$500 million for firefighting. Due to the seasonality and danger of these jobs, and our low unemployment rate, finding workers for wildfire firefighting jobs is difficult. The Anaconda Job Corps Center is an essential source of workers for Montana's wildfire firefighting efforts. In 2016, Job Corps students from Anaconda provided 19,459 hours of firefighting emergency response services. Without this training center, we may not be able to find the workforce needed to fight Montana's wildfires, and we certainly would face higher labor costs to secure the needed workers. We must maintain this training center to address the dangers, costs, and loss of human life presented by wildfires.

The Job Corps Center in Anaconda is an economic driver for the local area. Closing this center will immediately impact the 63 individuals who work there, and the entire area will feel the ripple effect. In addition to being one of the largest employers in the area, the center is also a community partner. Not only do students provide firefighting services across the state, but they have also assisted with snow removal and continuously work on maintenance and repair projects throughout the area. These efforts benefit the entire region while allowing students to gain skills.

Although this rural training center may not have as many graduates as those located in more urban areas, the workers trained through the Anaconda Job Corps Center do not have other private training programs available, making this center the only source of training for both workers and local businesses. Closing this center will lead to immediate job loss for the workers, but also will have negative impacts on our state's resiliency to fires and other disasters, economic development and private enterprise in our state. With this proposed closure, Montana would be left with just one Job Corps site, down from three that existed just a year ago. In addition to Anaconda's closure I am concerned about what the future of Trapper Creek will be moving forward.

For the benefit of our economy and the safety of our state, I urge you to maintain the Anaconda Job Corps Center.

Sincerely,



STEVE BULLOCK
Governor